

Conflict Management

*How to recognize and work productively
with differences*

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Conflict Management

How to recognize and work productively with differences

- Conflict is neither good nor bad . . .

It's inevitable!

- All unresolved conflict weakens relationships
- All unresolved conflict decreases productivity & lowers performance

Most conflicts are . . .

- Minor
- Easily handled
- Overlooked (*without harm to people and issues*)
- Avoidable! (*if*)
 - **Courtesies are extended**
 - **Explanations are provided**
 - **a service oriented behavior/attitude is displayed**
- Time bound

Conflict can be . . .

- Difference of opinion or approach
- Competing interests & goals
- To further hidden agendas
- Value conflicts
- Unclear/unspoken
- Space needs - “*Keep your distance*”
 - “*Do not disturb - refueling!*”

Constructive fighting is a skill which:

- Reduces tension & frustration
- Live with fewer inhibitions and no lies
- Enhances teamwork
- Free to grow - become more productive, creative
- Perform better
- Feel less guilty about negative emotions
- Face fewer unpleasant surprises
- Improves communication
- Worry less about the past which cannot be changed
- Feel less vulnerable

Positive effects of conflict . . .

- Raises different points of view
- Surfaces innovative
- Hones ideas that need development
- Taps the resources of all participants

Symptoms of underlying conflict

Individual

- Avoidance
 - *absenteeism, hiding out, yes-ing the boss*
 - *self-centeredness*
 - *hiding behind the rules*
- Repression
 - *ill health, escapist drinking, irregular productivity, low satisfaction, irritability*
- Reactive
 - *flashes of anger, non-cooperation, rumors*
 - *stealing and destruction, counter organizations, strikes*

Symptoms of underlying conflict

Inter-Group

- Competition
- Rigidity
- Appeals to superiors for decisions
- Decreased rate of interaction
- Low trust
- Suspicion
- Hostility

Conflict vs. Job Performance

- Productivity is GREATEST with a MODERATE amount of conflict.
- Productivity is LOWEST when:
 - There is no conflict (laissez-faire attitude)
 - There is too much conflict (high anxiety, tension)
- Bell shaped curve

Common but unhealthy

- Kitchen Sink Fighting
- Laundry List
- Mt. Vesuvius

Conflict resolution strategies

- Avoidance
 - *repress emotions*
 - *look the other way*
 - *run, quit, etc.*
- Defusion
 - *downplay*
 - *cool off*
- Confrontation
 - *power and force*
 - *negotiation*

Conflict Resolution

- **Compromise**
 - *Neither party gets everything he or she wants, but gets something.*
 - *Each gives up something. Often quite satisfactory to each.*
 - **This resolution is “part-way” for each.**
- **Capitulation**
 - *One partner gives in to what the other wants. This works well when the issue is relatively unimportant to one partner.*
 - **This resolution is “one way.”**

Conflict Resolution

- **Co-existence**
 - *Partners agree to disagree.*
 - **This resolution is “both ways.”**
- **Collaboration**
 - *Partners work together to understand the real issues behind the difference and search for a resolution that meets the needs of both.*
 - **This resolution is “both ways.”**

Conflict Styles

1. Placator - Yield-lose

low personal goals, high relationship goals

2. Detached - Lose-leave

low personal goals, low relationship goals

3. Tough Battler - Win-lose

high personal goals, low relationship goals

4. Problem Solver - Win-win

*high personal goals, high relationship
goals*

How a fight escalates

**Issue --> Personality -->
Relationship**

- 1. Fight over a specific issue
*escalates to***
- 2. Personality level
*which escalates to***
- 3. Relationship level
*“I want a divorce!”***

Healthy fighting techniques

- Choose what conflicts to address and what to let go
- Stick to the subject
- Deal in potential, not the past
- Don't use the “silent treatment”
- Attack the problem, not the other
- Never say “**you never**” or “**you always**”
- Offer solutions with constructive criticism
- Don't try to force the other person to be your carbon copy
- Be humble - you could be wrong
- Be willing to apologize
- Let the conflict end when it's over

Bad fighting techniques

- **uninvited character analysis**
- **stereotyping**
- **let down partner's expectations**
- **change the subject**
- **attack your partner's Achilles' Heel**
- **passive aggressive styles**
- **create disorder --> crisis maker**
- **physical force - never acceptable**

Sample technique for confronting

1. Set a time & place to talk
2. State your intentions & expectations for the outcome of this meeting
3. State the event
4. State your feelings about the event & end your statement with a question

Sample technique for confronting

5. Explore all relevant information

- *facts*
- *interpretations*
- *feelings*

6. Repeat your partner's view of the event

7. Explore solutions that would satisfy both of you

8. Offer "*fair exchange*" proposals

9. Test your agreement & commitment

"Give it a try"

Fair Fighting Techniques

1. **Timing - set aside a time to discuss the issues**
2. **Stick to the issue**
3. **Choose flexible terms**
4. **Be realistic**
5. **Be responsible**
6. **Affirm your spouse**
7. **Don't analyze**
8. **Be supportive**
9. **Take time limited cooling off periods**
10. **Compromise**
11. **Don't manipulate**
12. **Avoid money-control tactics**
13. **Model behavior you want your children to adopt**
14. **Be consistent**
15. **Practice**

Dirty Fighting Techniques

- 1. Timing - pick the wrong time and place**
- 15. Sarcasm**
- 2. Escalation**
- 16. Avoid responsibility**
- 3. Brown bagging**
- 17. Leave**
- 4. Over generalize**
- 18. Reject compromise**
- 5. Cross-complain**
- 19. Personalize**
- 6. Interrupt your partner**
- 20. Play the martyr**
- 7. Ask why**
- 21. Use money**
- 8. Blame**
- 22. Use children**
- 9. Pull rank**
- 23. Use relatives**
- 10. Don't listen, dominate**
- 24. Give advice**
- 11. List injustices**
- 25. Get even**
- 12. Label**
- 26. Use terminal language**
- 13. Mind read**
- 27. Be inconsistent**
- 14. Fortune-telling**
- 28. Harbor grudges**

In Summary

Conflict management is an
ART
which can be learned.